

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01 DRC-01 /121 W

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P R 181910Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1406

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMCONSUL RECIFE

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 440

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJECT: ELECTION OF GENERAL GEISEL--EMBASSY COMMENT

REF: BRASILIA 421 (NOTA)

1. THE ANTI-CAMPAIGN" OF THE OPPOSITION MDB PARTY
"ANTI-CANDIDATE" ULYSSES GUIMARAES MAY HAVE HAD ITS TOUCH
OF CYNICISM, BUT THIS WAS IN PERFECT KEEPING WITH THE
"NON-EVENT" OF THE ELECTION OF GENERAL GEISEL.

2. IN A COUNTRY WITH SOME DEMOCRATIC TRADITION, WHOSE
GOVERNMENT CLAIMS LEGITIMACY BASED ON THE WILL OF THE
PEOPLE, THE RUBBER-STAMPING EXERCISE WHICH CHARACTERIZED
THE "ELECTION" OF BRAZIL'S NEXT PRESIDENT CAN ONLY BE
CALLED A CHARADE. WHAT MAKES THIS NON-EVENT EVEN SADDER
FOR THE SYMPATHETIC OBSERVER WAS, ON ONE HAND, THE
SMUG SELF-SATISFACTION AND HYPOCRISY OF THOSE WHO RAN
THE SHOW--THE GOVERNMENT APPARATUS SUPPORTED BY THE
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SO-CALLED MAJORITY POLITICAL PARTY, AND, ON THE OTHER

HAND, THE ALMOST COMPLETE APATHY OF THE PUBLIC. FEW PEOPLE IN BRASILIA TOOK COGNIZANCE OF A NATIONAL "ELECTION" IN THEIR MIDST. WERE IT NOT FOR NEWSPAPER HEADLINES AND TV, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE EVENT. THE ONLY POSITIVE ASPECT OF THE EXERCISE WAS THAT IT WAS PEACEFUL AND ORDERLY, AN ACCOMPLISHMENT OF CONSIDERABLE NOTE SINCE ACHIEVEMENT OF NON-VIOLENT SUCCESSION IS ONE OF THE MORE PROBLEMATICAL ASPECTS OF AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES.

3. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT ALONG WITH THE REMARKABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE MEDICI GOVERNMENT IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD AND IN THE AREAS OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND SECURITY DURING THE LAST FIVE YEARS, IT DID NOT PERMIT A RETURN TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT--AS IT HAD PROMISED--AND THUS THE PRESENT ELECTION REPRESENTED ITS MOST NOTABLE POLITICAL FAILURE. THERE IS, AT THIS POINT, NO CONCRETE INDICATION TO THE OBSERVER OF THE BRAZILIAN SCENE THAT THE RETURN OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS--REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, HABEAS CORPUS, CIVIL LIBERTIES, ABSENCE OF CENSORSHIP--IS OTHER THAN A RHETORICAL OBJECTIVE OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION.

4. THE MOOD AMONG POLITICOS AND INTELLECTUALS IS GLOOMY--WITH GOOD REASON. COLUMNIST CASTELLO BRANCO CLAIMS THAT THIS IS AT LEAST IN PART THEIR OWN FAULT (SEE REFTEL). THE GLOOM IS INTENSIFIED BY THE TOTAL ABSENCE AT THIS WRITING OF ANY RAY OF KNOWLEDGE ON ANYONE'S PART--EXCEPT GEISEL'S--AS TO WHO WILL BE IN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION, WHAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WILL DO, HOW IT WILL ACT. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE HEAVILY CENSORED ESTADO DE SAO PAULO AND SURPRISINGLY THE GUTSY--OR FOOLISH--JOURNAL DE BRASILIA, THE REACTION IN THE DAILY PRESS HAS BEEN EXPECTEDLY SYCOPHANTIC.

5. THIS TELEGRAM DOES NOT ADDRESS ITSELF TO THE MUCH MORE PROFOUND QUESTION AS TO WHETHER DEMOCRACY CAN EXIST IN BRAZIL AT THIS STAGE IN ITS HISTORY AND WHETHER IT IS A GOOD THING FOR BRAZIL. THE ONLY POINT WE WISH

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TO MAKE IS THAT IT DOESN'T EXIST NOW IN SPITE OF ALL PRETENSES AND TRAPPINGS BY THE GOVERNMENT TO THE CONTRARY. ONE OF THE MAJOR QUESTIONS WHICH THE MEDICI ADMINISTRATION DID NOT ANSWER AND WHICH THE NEW GEISEL ADMINISTRATION MAY HAVE TO ADDRESS, AT SOME TIME DURING ITS TERM OF OFFICE, IS HOW CAN THIS GOVERNMENT CONTINUE TO BASE ITS LEGITIMACY ON THE POPULAR WILL WHEN IT REFUSES TO PERMIT THE POPULAR WILL TO BE EXPRESSED OR

EXERCISED. PRESIDENT GEISEL MIGHT HAVE TO FACE THE
ALTERNATIVES OF EITHER PERMITTING SOME POLITICAL OPENING
OR OF FINDING ANOUTHER SOURCE FOR HIS GOVERNMENT'S
LEGITIMACY.
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